

NIO/EAP

15 February 1980

MEMORANDUM FOR: National Intelligence Officers  
FROM : Assistant NIO for Warning  
SUBJECT : Food for Thought

Attached are some thought provoking questions which may be of use to you, perhaps in your monthly warning meetings next week.

Attachment



I. USSR-Afghanistan: Have the Soviets underestimated the magnitude of the task of pacifying the country?

Current reporting raises increasing doubts about the feasibility of Moscow's long-term plans for reconstituting the Afghan armed forces.

- a. Growing number of clashes between Soviet and Afghan forces.
- b. Evidence that some Afghan units have refused to engage the insurgents.
- c. Defections of whole army units to the insurgents.
- d. OSR's assessment (NID 13 Feb.) raising questions about Soviet capabilities to conduct counter-insurgency operations: "A change in strategy will be required if the Soviets are to stand a reasonable chance of succeeding without a massive military commitment."

Was the decision to intervene based on the assumption that a decisive turning point in the pacification campaign would be achieved in about three months? Soviet envoys have privately claimed that Soviet troops may begin to withdraw within two or three months. According to Babrak Karmal, Soviet commanders estimate that it will take at least until some time this summer to pacify the rural areas (implying that the Soviets were expected to face little challenge in securing the main urban areas).

If reconstitution of the Afghan armed forces is no longer a viable option and if the pacification strategy is in trouble by mid-summer, will the Soviets have any alternative other than massive occupation of the country? This alternative obviously would have far-reaching implications for Soviet policy toward Pakistan and Iran, as well as for Soviet relations with the West.

II. Soviet Intentions toward Pakistan: If the Soviets encounter substantially greater problems in Afghanistan than they originally anticipated, will they adopt a more threatening stance toward Pakistan? Is the Soviet stance already hardening? Will the Soviets try to deal with their dilemma by making force withdrawals from Afghanistan contingent upon a Pakistani pledge to refrain from increasing assistance--its own as well as external aid--to the insurgents? A Reuters report of 11 February quoted the Afghan government as stating that "limited contingents" of Soviet forces would withdraw as soon as an unspecified "credible guarantee" was received.

If the Soviets fail to secure a satisfactory commitment from Pakistan, will they shift to a policy of intimidation in dealing with the Zia regime?

- a. Continuing reports of Soviet contingency planning for military action against Pakistan.
- b. Incitement of Baluchi and Pushtun separatist demands. (Gromyko's warning that Pakistani cooperation with the West in assisting Afghan resistance will "undermine its position as an independent state.")
- c. Soviet warning to Pakistani officials in Geneva that the USSR will not stand by and see Pakistan used as a training center and safe haven for Afghan "bandits" and that the Soviets will strike at hostile refugee concentrations.

President Zia's Intentions: Is Zia's equivocal posture the result of Soviet pressures or his calculation of Pakistani interests? Is he simply stalling in an effort to extract greater US military and economic aid and firmer security commitments, or is he genuinely anxious to avoid actions which might give the Soviets a pretext for escalating their pressures, including limited cross-border military action? The Pakistanis reportedly are resisting Chinese efforts to supply arms to the Afghan resistance because they apparently fear that significant outside support to the insurgents could precipitate Soviet action on the border. HuangHua is said to have found Zia to be more worried about how US and Chinese assistance would affect Pakistan's relations with India and the USSR than about a Soviet military threat.

III. USSR-Iran:

a. How will the Soviets evaluate Bani-Sadr's apparent progress in strengthening his authority and the improved prospects for an early solution to the hostage impasse? Does the invitation to Ghotbzadeh to visit Moscow imply a negative signal to Bani-Sadr, particularly following Iran's protest over Soviet military activity in the Transcaucasus MD and Bani-Sadr's warning to Brezhnev against interfering in Iran's internal affairs?

b. If Bani-Sadr has in fact won Khomeini's approval of a formula to resolve the hostage issue, will the Soviets adopt a cooler attitude toward the Tehran regime? Or will they see no alternative for the time being to maintaining their relatively benign attitude, as reflected in Brezhnev's 10 February message to Khomeini reaffirming Soviet support for Iran's independence and territorial integrity?

c. If it is accepted that Soviet military training exercises in the Transcaucasus MD exceed "normal" levels, do these activities represent:

- preliminary measures to increase the readiness of Soviet forces.
- an attempt to influence political developments in Iran, particularly Revolutionary Council policies toward the US and the USSR.
- an exaggerated Soviet perception (particularly in the first half of January) of an increased chance of some US military initiative to force a resolution of the hostage impasse? Soviet Foreign Ministry officials reportedly stated in January that Moscow's "principal fear" was that the US might use the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan as an excuse to "invade" Iran.

d. Will Soviet policy toward Iran in the next three months be more heavily and directly influenced by developments in Afghanistan? The NID of 2 February noted that Soviet concern about Iranian support to the Afghan insurgents is "contributing to mounting dissatisfaction with the trend of events within Iran." In view of statements by Khomeini and Bani-Sadr condemning the invasion and promising support for Afghan resistance, will Soviet difficulties in Afghanistan impel Moscow to adopt "linkage" tactics in dealing with Tehran, i.e., by pressing for an Iranian commitment to refrain from interfering in Afghanistan? If the Iranians reject such pressure, will the Soviets shift to a policy aimed at destabilizing the Khomeini-Bani-Sadr leadership and giving greater support to minority groups in Iran?

IV. Syria-Lebanon: Does the private Syrian explanation in early February of Assad's decision to withdraw Syrian troops from Beirut now seem more credible, i.e., an effort to force Sarkis to exert stronger leadership over quarreling Lebanese factions? Has the "postponement" of withdrawal diluted Assad's leverage? If the Lebanese government and the PLO refuse to accede to Syrian demands, what are the chances that Assad will then order at least a partial withdrawal? Is Assad overestimating his leverage and prospects for achieving a favorable political solution that would include a bilateral defense agreement and greater control over anti-Syrian Christian militias?

What were the motivations that impelled Assad to press for a "solution" in Lebanon at this time? Is he under greater pressure to return substantial numbers of troops to Syria? If Assad fails to achieve at least some of his current objectives in Lebanon, what effect might this have on his future policy and on Palestinian freedom of action vis-a-vis Israel?

V. Libya: Will Libya's provocative moves against Tunisia and France, and the airlift of armored vehicles to Djibouti, be followed by further risky adventures? Will Qadhafi now escalate his campaign against the French presence in Africa and renew attempts to overthrow the Bourguiba government? Did Qadhafi simply miscalculate prospects for stimulating an internal movement to bring Bourguiba down, or did he have some plausible reason to believe the Tunisian regime's authority is eroding?

What is Egypt's perception of Qadhafi's motives and intentions? Might Sadat calculate that Libya's provocations provide a convenient justification for an Egyptian attempt to eliminate Qadhafi? The "target date" for Egypt's invasion of Libya was deferred last August to April 1980. Might Sadat now have better prospects for winning the support of his senior commanders for a strike against Libya this spring? Are there any indications that Cairo is giving more active consideration to a move against Libya?

VI. Vietnam-Kampuchea: Are the Vietnamese preparing to launch the major phase of their offensive in western Kampuchea which was delayed in late December? Vietnamese military communications on 1 February referred to a "dry season mission" in February, including attacks on Pol Pot forces inside Thailand, and a Vietnamese defector has described a plan for operations up to 10 kilometers inside Thailand, including multi-divisional attacks on Thai positions if Thai forces react.

OSR has suggested that "February would seem about the latest period for launching a major operation to curtail Thai support for anti-Vietnamese resistance forces" in view of the advent of the rainy season in May. Is it time to consider a second Alert Memorandum?